

REMARKS

Claims 1 and 2 remain pending and are currently amended. Claim 3 is canceled.

Claims 1 and 3 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over *Okita et al.* (JP 2002-127817) in view of *Meinershagen* (U.S. Patent No. 4,556,862), and claim 2 stands rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over *Okita et al.* As mentioned above, claim 3 is canceled, thereby rendering its rejection moot. Regarding claims 1 and 2, applicant respectfully submits that these rejections should be withdrawn.

Applicants first summarize the relevance of the asserted prior art.

On one hand, *Meinershagen* discloses a pattern in which combinations of illuminated and non-illuminated lights are grouped into pairs, and this pattern moves in the turn direction of a vehicle thereby achieving a flow of bright and dark positions. The *Meinershagen* configuration was made for increasing the visibility from external observation points in front of and behind the vehicle by making such a flow of bright and dark positions. In particular, *Meinershagen* discloses that displays having a flow of bright and dark positions are advantageous for visibility from external observation points.

On the other hand, *Okita* discloses LED lamps included in a battery meter flickering sequentially in correspondence with the operation of the turn signal switch, thereby causing the lights of the battery meter to appear to move as if flowing in the direction of the turn indication, and the driver can see the turn signal flickering. As is apparent from Figs. 6, 7, and 9, the LED lamps are lit at a specified time sequence. *Okita* discloses that the indicator operates not only in a mode in which one LED lamp is lit at a time, but the indicator may be set so that plural LED lamps are lit (and move) at a time.

That is, the indicators of *Meinershagen* and *Okita* increase visibility by activating one or more lamps to move in a flowing sequence. In contrast, in the claimed invention, the number of illuminated lamps increases in the vehicle turn direction such that a light band elongates. In other words, in the asserted prior art, visibility increases by light movement, and in the present invention, the vehicle turn direction is ascertained more easily from the direction in which the light band elongates. Thus, combining teachings from the prior references would not produce the illumination sequence of the present invention.

Further, the present invention relates to an electric vehicle where a display unit is arranged at the center of a steering bar (handle) in the front of a driver's seat, and this configuration was developed based on studies of which display modes adequately caution drivers, who look carefully in the forward direction. When the invention is embodied in a small electric vehicle for the aged, it enables those with poor eyesight to see pertinent display information more easily.

With the present submission, claims 1 and 2 are amended to recite the subject matter formerly recited in claim 2 (now canceled). The present amendment emphasizes the utility the invention in a display unit for small electric vehicles to increase the visibility of the driver, and the asserted prior art cannot suggest the claimed invention. Applicant notes that *Okita et al.* discusses a turn direction indicator *for the vehicle operator who is planning to turn*, but, in contrast, *Meinershagen* discusses a turn direction indicator *that is visible, not to the vehicle operator, but to others viewing the front or back of the vehicle*. The Office Action provides no explanation of how a teaching of enhancing the visibility of a vehicle's external turn signals would supposedly motivate someone to modify a vehicle's "internal" turn signal indicator used by the vehicle operator. No teaching cited *from the asserted prior art* explains why the majority

of external vehicle observers would supposedly need the enhanced visibility in an internal turn signal indicator that some aged people need.

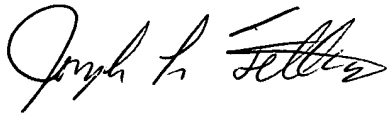
For at least the reasons provided herein, applicant requests the withdrawal of the obviousness rejections of claims 1 and 2.

Applicants now submit that the application is in condition for allowance. Accordingly, a Notice of Allowability is hereby requested. If the Examiner believes that this application is not in condition for allowance, he is welcome to contact applicant's undersigned attorney to discuss a resolution to any outstanding issue.

If this paper is not timely filed, Applicants petition for an extension of time. The fee for the extension, and any other fees that may be due, may be debited from Deposit Account No. 50-2866.

Respectfully submitted,

WESTERMAN, HATTORI, DANIELS & ADRIAN, LLP

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joseph L. Felber". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Joseph" and last name "Felber" clearly distinguishable.

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